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ABSTRACT

The central purpose of storytelling in the classroom is for enjoyment, both on the part of the storyteller and the audience. On the other hand, especially when time is allotted for storytelling during reading instruction periods, teachers can integrate the art of storytelling with practical competence building activities. For example, the tale of the three bears can provide direct instruction in sequencing and cause and effect. In addition, storytelling enhances language appreciation, creativity, self-expression, and group cooperation. Storytelling can be used in the Tennessee Instructional Model (TIM), in all three major areas of the model--set, direct instruction, and closure. As part of "set" in TIM, storytelling can help orient learners to the lesson which follows. Storytelling fits in the direct instruction portion of TIM when combined with retelling and oral or written questioning strategies. Storytelling can enhance closure by serving as a topic summary, a precursor to a new unit, or as a way of promoting mood. Holistically, storytelling helps the learner's ability to reason, remember, see similarities and differences, determine relationships, and think critically. (Two figures and a sample storytelling card are provided, including suggestions for storytellers. (MM)

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A PLEASANT JOURNEY

INTO CLASSROOM STORYTELLING

Presented by : Evelyn Dwyer
Tennessee Reading Association Conference, Nov. 1988

The central purpose of storytelling in the classroom is for enjoyment, both on the part of the storyteller and the audience. On the other hand, especially when time is allotted for storytelling during reading instruction periods, teachers can integrate the art of storytelling with practical competence building activities. While telling a story, without diminishing its joyful properties, the instructor can focus on one or several comprehension competencies in a subtle manner. For example, the age old tale of the three bears is a natural for providing direct instruction in sequencing and cause and effect. Should the storyteller /reading teacher desire, there are also several other comprehension competencies he or she can promote through telling the story of the three bears.

The purpose of telling stories and finding stories to tell is not to fit them to comprehension competencies. Quite the opposite is true. The storyteller is encouraged first and foremost to tell good stories effectively and then determine if the story lends itself to particular or general comprehension instruction. The storyteller/teacher can collect favorite stories and determine, through studying a checklist, what comprehension skills can be encouraged best through a particular story. The storyteller/ teacher can then keep the checklist for future reference and/or specifically designate particular stories for times during the school year when promotion of a particular comprehension skill is emphasized. For example, if the basal series in use strongly emphasizes predicting outcomes in a particular unit, the teacher/ storyteller might designate particular stories for this time frame. A model for matching stories with comprehension skills is presented in Figure 1 on the next page.

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FIGURE 1
COMPREHENSION SKILLS

STORY	Main Idea	Determining Sequence	Noting Details	Inference (drawing conclusions)	Cause/Effect	Prediction (what will happen?)	Fantasy and Realism	Fact/opinion	Evaluation	Build Experiential Background

HOW CAN I JUSTIFY STORYTELLING IN MY CLASSROOM?

1. Storytelling has "affective" value. It may enhance language appreciation, creativity, self-expression, and group cooperation. Listening and/or telling stories may help promote personal happiness, relaxation, and imagination. Good literature may help to shape concepts about self and relationships with other people.
2. Story telling may be used as part of "SET" in the Tennessee Instructional Model (TIM). It can orient learners to the topic or unit to come, serve as an advance organizer, or may be used as a way of enhancing interest and motivation of the students.
3. Storytelling may be used as part of "DIRECT INSTRUCTION" in the TIM Model. Many of the following comprehension skills may be taught through the use of storytelling combined with oral and written questioning, retelling strategies.
   A. Literal level: main idea, recognizing and recalling details, sequence
   B. Inferential level: inferring cause and effect, predicting outcomes, drawing conclusions, making comparisons.
   C. Critical level: making judgements as to fact or opinion, fantasy or reality, bias, propoganda, validity of reasoning
4. Storytelling may be used as part of "CLOSURE" in the TIM Model. A story can serve as a summary to a unit, as a "kick-off" to a new or related unit, and leave the learner with a desire to hear and read more.

This model lists several of the most important comprehension skills but the list should not be limited to those presented above. The idea here is not to define the skills or the stories to be used but rather to present a concept for application in a wide variety of circumstances.

Perhaps the focal point relative to promoting competencies rests with listening. Direction for listening to a story, for example, for the purpose of detecting a sequence of events encourages both listening and comprehension skills. Writing can be added by having students work either individually or collaboratively to prepare a written account of what was heard.

Telling stories with comprehension skills as a by-product over a period of time promotes within the storyteller/teacher an instinct for integrating the joy of the story with the practicality of the skills. The teacher/storyteller no longer needs to focus on developing comprehension skills but rather, eases into discussion and questioning strategies that flow naturally from the story itself.

In our age of specific skill fragmentation and basic skill emphasis, how can the teacher/storyteller justify storytelling in the classroom? We have discussed in a general way how storytelling may be used to enhance comprehension competencies. Exactly how or where might storytelling fit in the Tennessee Instructional Model? There are possibilities in all three major areas of the Model: Set, Direct Instruction, and Closure. Storytelling may be used as part of "set" in the Tennessee Instructional Model by helping to orient learners to the lesson to come. Storytelling, in relationship to "set", may serve as an advance organizer for the unit of study. Without a doubt, storytelling may be used to promote interest and motivation.

Storytelling also fits in the "direct instruction" portion of the Tennessee Instructional Model. Most of the comprehension skills enumerated by grade level in the Tennessee Instructional Model may be taught through the use of storytelling combined with retelling, oral, or written questioning strategies.

The "direct instruction" portion of the TIM Model advocates that direct instruction at some point involves student interaction and/or controlled practice. Storytelling may be especially designed for full classroom or individual participation. Through group response the entire class may become involved with the story as a shared oral reading experience.

The third major portion of the TIM Model, "closure", may also be enhanced by the use of storytelling. A story may serve as a topic summary, as a precursor to a new unit, or as a way of promoting mood, i.e., a pleasant emotional state of mind which looks forward to the next experience on the agenda.

In judging whether or not a student has "good reading comprehension", attention should be focused upon whether or not the student has sufficient background knowledge for understanding the written message. Storytelling, as a "whole language" experience, may help to build experiential and conceptual background. By listening to good literature, whether in prose or verse, the structure of the action of the story unfolds. The student's perception of story structure and organization would thereby be enhanced. Holistically, without specifically fragmenting or separating the skills, storytelling may help the learner's ability to reason, to remember, to see similiarities and differences, to determine relationships, and to think critically.

Educator, Gladys Hunt, in her book entitled, HONEY FOR A CHILD'S HEART, refers to THE ART OF LOVING by Erich Fromm. Dr. Fromm speaks of a child's basic need for milk and honey. Milk is the symbol of the care a child receives for his physical needs. Honey symbolizes the sweetness of life, that special quality that gives the sparkle within a person. Good stories are rich in honey. Have you ever thought of yourself as providing honey for a child's heart? Sharing stories, like reading a good book, opens a magic gateway into a world of wonder, beauty, and adventure. Storytelling, in one sense, is the art of loving children and helping them to grow.

The remainder of this presentation will be devoted to telling stories. May the stories in some small way give wings to the spirit and motivate you to want to share stories with your students. A handout is provided which may answer some of your questions regarding how to "learn" a story and how to "tell" a story. Recommendations for utilizing storytelling in your classroom are also provided. Please see Figure 2, tips for storytellers, for further suggestions.

FIGURE 2

TIPS FOR STORYTELLERS

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TIRA - Nov. 1988

TOPIC: A PLEASANT JOURNEY INTO CLASSROOM STORYTELLING

Rationale: The key to making children want to read largely depends upon the teacher and the classroom environment. Through the enthusiastic reading aloud or telling of stories, children begin to associate reading with pleasure.

HOW DO YOU LEARN A STORY?

1. Read the story or listen to a tape of the story several times.
2. Make sure that you really like the story before you spend any more time on it.
3. Take a large index card and try to write down the sequence of events from memory. Write only a few words per idea.
4. Listen to the story or read it again. Check your card for accuracy. Revise or rewrite card as necessary.
5. Use your card and say the story aloud in front of a mirror or into a tape recorder. If you like, try to "say" the story without the card.
6. Tell the story to a child - the child will be interested in the story not you.
7. Tell the story to another child and add something to it - new details or embellishments - put an element of repetition into it.
8. Try to add an interactive factor to your story.
9. Tell the story to a small group of children. Revise your story by enlarging upon points that children find particularly pleasurable.
10. Compare your story now with the original and see how it has changed. Notice also, how you alter the story depending upon the response of your "audience".
11. If you are really afraid of forgetting, take your card with you. No one ever said that you couldn't! Communicate and forget yourself. Adjust your perspective to the enjoyment derived from your story by the child.

HOW DO YOU TELL A STORY?

1. Wear something comfortable that you can move easily in. DON'T wear high heels.
2. Familiarize yourself with the storytelling setting before the "audience" arrives.
3. If in a classroom, tell the story to everyone at the same time. Put a do not disturb sign on the door. Hope the intercom will remain silent!
4. Center yourself before your begin. Pause, smile, look around the room. Take a second to breathe deeply before you actually begin.
5. Begin slowly so that the audience can get oriented to the subject or style.
6. If telling to children, you might need to familiarize students with any unusual vocabulary terms. You may want to provide comments that will act as an advance organizer for your story.

7. If telling to adults and you have not been introduced, tell the audience your name, but do not launch into an explanation of your credentials. For example, "Hello, my name is Jane Smith. I'm glad to be here with you today. I have a story that I hope you will enjoy...."
8. Don't issue any disclaimers or make any negative comments regarding your storytelling experience or ability.
9. Stand or sit. Move around if appropriate but DO NOT pace or wring your hands.
10. Do not use dialects that do not come naturally to you. They can be offensive, distracting, and funny.
11. Vary your vocal tones, i.e., pitch, and dynamics.
12. Watch out for reoccuring vocal patterns. Waves that make one sleepy!
13. Try to have eye contact with individuals in audience.
14. Vary facial expressions and gestures as appropriate. Do not be overly affected.
15. Don't do anything unexpected like jump at your audience or issue blood curdling screams.
16. At the beginning of your storytelling endeavors do not try to change your voice several times within the same story to represent different characters. This may come later but it really isn't necessary.
17. If you have to have props, use only very few.
18. When you are nearing the end of your story, cadence to a close. In other words, do not end with your foot or voice up in the air leaving the audience to wonder if you are really finished. Drop your voice, slow down.

SAMPLE STORYTELLING CARD - Three Billy Goats Gruff

In Norway a long time ago... A little one, middle,great big Longed to eat fresh green grass Horrible, mean troll Little goat - middle-great big **Trip, trap, trip, trap,let me pass.I want to eat the fresh green grass** Who's that come trip trapping It is I I shall eat you Dont. I have a bigger brother yet to come More of a meal	This bridge was made for everyone. Now troll be gone. Snip, snap, snout This tale is out THE THREE BILLY GOATS GRUFF TRADITIONAL TALE ADAPTED BY HEATHER FORREST

DO YOU HAVE ANY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CLASSROOM STORYTELLING?

1. Set up a specific time each day to either read a story aloud or tell a story. Emphasize informality and comfort. Acquaint self with good story literature.

2. Have a small center containing short books and mini-books taken from old basals or storybooks. Children may make covers from wall paper books, etc. Children may want to write their own stories for inclusion in this center.

3. Initiate re-telling or original telling of very short stories in a small center time. A flannel board small center is an excellent idea. Place pieces of flannel to be cut up, as well as books and cataloges which may be cut up to make characters. File folders, labels, and markers are a good idea. You will see wonderful things happen here in regard to sequence in stories, even with first graders!

4. Initiate a "swapping ground" for young storytellers once a week. Set up specific guidelines, perhaps in the form of an agreement among the childre and you.

   Guideline Example: a) We will not use the name of any person that we know

   b) We will never make fun of a physical or mental handicap
   c) We will make no reference to private body parts
   d) Only positive remarks may be made about stories that have been told.
   e) No one ever HAS to tell a story
   f) Stories will be short
   g) We will be attentive and polite to one another
   h) We will not interrupt the story of a class member
   I) We will always give credit to the author of the stor or tell where we found the story

5. Some students will choose to locate stories but not tell or read those stories aloud. Locators and illustrators are great to find!

6. Be aware of your parent population. Are there any obvious types of stories you must avoid? Have there been any objections to basals or library books from parents of children in your room?

7. Obtain storytelling tapes from National Storytelling Institute (NAAPS)
   P.O. Box 309
   Jonesborough, Tennessee 37659

   Phone: 615-753-2171

Preview tapes and place in center with tape recorder and headphones. Children will desperately want the opportunity to listen!